



# Missouri Highlights 2007

## **MISSOURI ASSOCIATION OF RC&D COUNCILS**

*Making Things Happen in Rural Missouri*

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# Making Good Things Happen

## **Big Springs RC&D**

### **Best Management Practices and Landowner Incentives for Woody Biomass Harvests**

Big Springs RC&D, in cooperation with the Top of the Ozarks RC&D, Bootheel RC&D, Eastern Ozarks Forestry Council, Missouri Department of Conservation, and University Extension, is working to develop a Best Management Practices (BMP) manual for use by landowners, loggers, and agency personnel to guide them in harvesting woody biomass and to provide incentives for using BMPs.

Missouri's forests make up about one-third of the land base, and approximately 80 percent of these forests are privately owned. Missouri's privately owned forests are overgrown with small diameter (6"-12") trees, and there are vast acreages that are unhealthy due to decades of neglect and mismanagement. Forests in this condition are not attractive to new industry. From a forest management perspective, there is no incentive to manage these stands because there are no viable markets for small-diameter, low-value material. Development of this resource for energy uses has great potential for new markets, as well as helping solve the nation's energy problems.

This project is comprised of two phases. Phase I is the development of a Best Management Practices Manual for Biomass Harvest. Phase II is a Feasibility Study.

Funding for the BMP manual and Feasibility Study is in part through an \$88,000 USDA Forest Service Grant awarded in

August 2007 and administered by the Top of the Ozarks RC&D Council.

### **MoDOT Erosion Control Study**

The Missouri Department of Transportation's (MoDOT) District 9 started an erosion control study in 2007 in Carter County along Highway 60 east of Van Buren. The three-year study is in cooperation with the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Plant Materials Center in Elsberry, the Big Springs RC&D Council, and the Carter County Soil and Water Conservation District.

The study plans to evaluate different seeding mixtures, fertilizer and lime treatments, temporary erosion-control blankets, and composting mixtures that will work best to control soil erosion created by new highway construction. Excessive soil erosion occurring after construction of two new lanes has caused concerns about the amount of sediment impacting the water quality in the Current River and its tributaries.

### **Doniphan Park Project**

The Doniphan City Council is interested in developing a 21-acre parcel of donated land adjacent to the Doniphan School into land for recreational and sporting opportunities while complementing the natural resources of the area. In conjunction with the City of Doniphan, the Big Springs RC&D and NRCS' South Missouri Water Quality Project office have developed a conceptual design and conservation plan to guide the city in developing Quick Creek Park.

## Bootheel RC&D

### Wetland Development

An EPA-funded Wetland Program Development project is under way in the Bootheel RC&D area. The \$208,000 grant funds will be used over a three-year period. The first phase of the project calls for constructing a pumping station into a Wetlands Reserve Program site in Stoddard County.

Monitoring stations have been established to study the natural filtering effects on water from wetland sites which release into Cypress Ditch. The project should result in providing improved wetland management practices and hard scientific data relating to environmental and economic effects of wetlands.

Partners in the project include Southeast Missouri State University, Missouri Department of Conservation, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Stoddard County Industrial Development Authority, Missouri Enterprise, Inc., and the University of Missouri-Rolla.

### RC&D Website Project

Utilizing grant money from AT&T as a match, the Bootheel RC&D acquired additional money from the Missouri Department of Natural Resources' Soil and Water Program for a website development project for SWCDs. Bootheel RC&D facilitated this project and provided the technical support. Launched in 2006, funding for the project will support the sites for three years. The website can be viewed at: [www.bootheelswcd.com/](http://www.bootheelswcd.com/).



## Gateway RC&D

### Initial Steps

During 2007, the proposed Gateway RC&D took its first step forward as a project area. Working with Southwest Missouri RC&D, Gateway RC&D hosted two Firewise meetings. The Gateway RC&D also is partnering with the Plant Materials Center in Elsberry to sponsor a proposed grant for research relating to the production of Osage Orange for making biofuels.

## Green Hills RC&D

### Career Independence

The Green Hills RC&D Council is addressing the problem of retaining youth in rural communities after they have completed their educations by strategically prioritizing projects to reduce migration and to improve job skills. Career Independence, more commonly called "the school to work program" is an innovative program that accomplishes this objective.

The Career Independence program is a two-year course of study for high school juniors and seniors less than 18 years old who show a strong desire to gain employment upon graduation. This experience provides an opportunity to learn and refine skills increasing their future employment potential locally.

The Grand River Technical School's "Career Independence Program" is teaming up with the Green Hills RC&D project office and other local businesses to place students on a real work schedule in a real work environment. The program is working with 16 scholastically challenged vocational students from a nine-county area in north-central Missouri served by the Green Hills RC&D.

### Grant Writing Seminar

Ricky Newport, Green Hills Area substitute teacher and participant at the "Grant Writing for Success" seminars hosted by the Green Hills RC&D Council, utilized his grant writing knowledge, skills, and abilities to obtain a \$25,000 grant from the Marvin B. Enoch's Charitable Trust in August 2007. Newport's grant application, submitted on behalf of the Carroll County Historical Society, provided adequate funds for new electrical wiring, a new roof, and other structural renovations to the Carroll County Museum in Carrolton. The museum accommodates about 200 visitors through the summer months, and Newport anticipates that the renovations will increase the number of visitors by at least 100 percent.



## Heart of Missouri RC&D

### Dry Hydrants

The Heart of Missouri RC&D Council, in cooperation with the Missouri Association of RC&D Councils and the USDA Forest Service, installed 72 dry hydrants (pictured, right) in 18 rural fire protection districts within the eight-county RC&D area. Cost-share assistance totaled \$28,800 with an estimated \$30,000 in local matching services.

### Non Profit Designation

The council also received its 501c3 Tax Exempt Determination from IRS, completing all necessary business requirements to operate as a Non Profit entity in Missouri.



## Northeast Missouri RC&D

### Fox River Ecosystem Development Project

The Fox River 319 Project had a successful year in 2007, during which it wrote 20 plans addressing 2,938 acres and saved 1,650 tons of soil. It conducted three field days, a workshop, and four field demonstrations. It produced two newsletters and two public service announcements, formed a Stream Team, decommissioned 24 wells, and implemented 72 BMPs.

### Council Expansion

The Northeast Missouri RC&D coordinator met with the soil and water conservation district boards and county commissioners in Shelby, Macon, and Marion counties to promote RC&D and to invite those counties to become part of the Northeast Missouri RC&D area. All three counties accepted the invitations, and final approval to expand the area has been received from USDA.

## Osage Valley RC&D

### Watershed Management Action Plans

The Osage Valley RC&D Council coordinated numerous state and federal agencies, plus non-governmental groups, in collecting, assimilating, and drafting watershed management action plans for the Marais des Cygnes, Marmaton, and Little Osage Rivers watersheds within Missouri. Those same three watersheds continue westerly into Kansas, where the bulk of the watershed is already under a management action plan.

Representatives from Kansas aided the Missouri planners from the beginning by providing watershed data and guidance

on similar issues and concerns derived from input from the bi-state watershed residents. A Citizens Watershed Committee (CWC) was formed to assume local leadership responsibilities with many of the same agencies and non-governmental groups serving as technical advisors.

Missouri watershed residents have already benefited from the three Missouri plans. The Bates and Vernon SWCDs received Special Area Land Treatment (SALT) Project funding partly because of this process. And a complimentary watershed project has been approved, and is in final contract negotiations between local and state staff.

Additionally, Mound Branch Watershed, a 14-digit hydrologic unit with mixed land uses, came under scrutiny by DNR and EPA for water quality violations. The CWC, working with DNR agency staff, Osage Valley RC&D, SWCD staff, and local city officials agree to the recommended remediation approach. Through the Osage Valley RC&D, a grant application was submitted that would moderate contributing watershed activity factors, monitor the stream water quality, and provide continuous education to watershed residents and users.

The same CWC approach has been to focus on small incremental projects. However, an opportunity presented itself soon after the Watershed Action Plan was signed. The CWC, in cooperation with the Kansas Department of Health and Environment and Hillsdale Watershed Water Quality Project, agreed to submit a grant application for the entire Marais des Cygnes River Watershed Basin, Kansas and Missouri. This grant had to be approved by the governors of both states.

The “Bi-state Marais des Cygnes Basin Targeted Watershed Restoration Grant” was awarded at a combined ceremony in December 2007. The four-year, nationally competitive Watershed Restoration Grant totaled \$1.2 million, which combines a local match of \$300,000. Watershed restoration activities will focus on agricultural, plus increasing urbanization concerns and issues, following a north-south corridor along the Kansas-Missouri border. The Marais des Cygnes River Basin, one of 14 contributing tributaries to Truman Lake Reservoir, is a major contributing water recharge source.

The Missouri Department of Conservation, in cooperation with Osage Valley RC&D, Bates, Polk, St. Clair, and Vernon counties SWCDs, and numerous special interests, embarked upon a joint effort to restore beneficial terrestrial and aquatic habitat in the Marmaton/Wah’Kon-Tah Uplands Conservation Opportunity Area (COA) located within the Little Osage River Watershed. This COA provides another unique opportunity to partner with others having similar concerns and issues.

## Prairie Rose RC&D

### Education Specialist Expands Solid Waste Education Program

The Prairie Rose RC&D expanded the solid waste management education program by hiring an Education/Information Specialist. The program extends from pre-school through college and beyond.

Its mission is to bring conservation and solid waste concerns and solutions to the future stewards of our earth. This program reaches children while they are still citizens in the making, empowering them to be involved in learning experiences and community activities.

A program example is the Dilemma Derby, an activity held in conjunction with the Morgan County Water Festival and the 2007 Concordia R-II Summer School. Using a computer version of a Department of Natural Resources’ Project Wet activity, students were presented a real life, water quality situation. They were asked to research the situation and present a solution.

Another example is the Calendar Billboard Project. It focuses on raising awareness of illegal dumping. After selecting a host county, 5th grade students of that county are given an illegal dumping awareness presentation. They draw posters that

promote awareness of the dangers of illegal dumping. Winning posters are made into calendars and billboards that are distributed and displayed throughout the county. Businesses are presented information about illegal dumping and asked to support the project with a donation. Their business cards are displayed on the calendars and the businesses help to distribute calendars to their customers.

Another project through this program, Reusables, helps to provide educator supplies for local classrooms. It collects reusable materials from industry and residences that would normally end up in a landfill. The items are attractively displayed, and teachers are allowed to take the objects for creative use in their classrooms.

## Southwest Missouri RC&D

### Firewise

The Southwest Missouri RC&D is sponsoring the Missouri Firewise Education project to help homeowners protect their property from wildfire. The project is funded with \$300,000 from the USDA Forest Service.

The RC&D also is sponsoring the Ice Storm Mitigation and Firewise Supplement project to educate the public about the increased fire danger from the excess fuel of downed trees in the woods due to ice storms in southern Missouri. It also is funded with \$300,000 from the USDA Forest Service. Television, radio, movie theatre, and billboard advertisements will explain safe burning tips and fire protection measures to be taken by the public and to promote websites that supply additional information.



### RC&D Forester

An RC&D forester (funded by NRCS and Missouri Department of Conservation) provides forestry technical assistance to landowners for forest stand improvement, tree planting, weed control, windbreaks, odorbreaks, Conservation Reserve Program, Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Forest Land Enhancement Program, and Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program.

## Demonstration Corn Burners

The Southwest Missouri RC&D sponsored a demonstration of utilizing corn burners to heat poultry houses to reduce propane costs and to improve air quality in the poultry houses. The RC&D assisted poultry growers in their pursuit of USDA Rural Development grants.

## Poultry Odorbreaks, Red Cedar and Ozark Chinquapin Projects

The RC&D also is sponsoring a Poultry Odorbreaks Demonstration, a Red Cedar Challenge or Opportunity Conference and an Ozark Chinquapin Restoration Effort.

## Top of the Ozarks RC&D

### Straw-bale Homes

Eight straw-bale homes are scheduled for construction in 2008. The homes, sponsored by Top of The Ozarks RC&D and HUD, will utilize Missouri-grown straw to provide needed housing and alternative agricultural markets in Douglas, Wright, Howell, Texas, Shannon and Ozark counties.

### Jacks Fork Watershed Activities

Tentative approval has been given for 319 funding for septic demonstrations within the watershed. These initiatives are a partnership of the Jacks Fork Watershed Steering Committee, Top of the Ozarks RC&D, and The National Park Service.

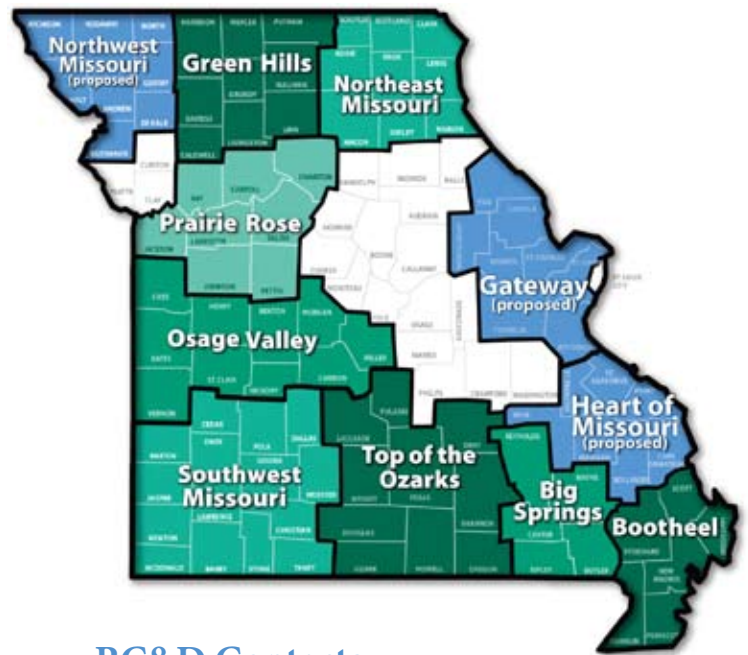
The Top of the Ozarks RC&D held a Watershed Day for the 4th and 5th graders of the five school districts within the Jacks Fork Watershed. Funding was provided by EPA.

### Farmers' Market

The Top of the Ozarks has received a grant to evaluate, promote, and educate farmers' market vendors within the region. Emphasis will also be placed on strengthening existing markets while developing alternative products.

### Grant Writing

Successful grant writing assistance was provided to secure \$727,388 in funding for the Village of Raymondville (population 424) to receive fiber optics.



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**RESOURCE CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT**

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in Rural Missouri***